

1 Two, Motion to inspect the evidence;

2 Three, Motion to remove lights and  
3 cameras from the jail;

4 Four, Motion for private consultation  
5 with Attorney;

6 Five, Petition to authorize Defendant  
7 to take depositions;

8 Six, Motion to permit conference with  
9 Hule;

10 Seven, Motion to permit photographs;

11 Eight, Motion to designate Court  
12 Reporters;

13 Nine, Motion to stipulate testimony;

14 Ten, Suggestion of proper name.

15 You are waiving and giving up all these  
16 rights?

17 MR. RAY: Yes, sir.

18 THE COURT: Has anything besides your  
19 sentence of 99 years in the penitentiary been  
20 promised to you to get you to plead guilty?

21 MR. RAY: No, no one has used pressure.

22 THE COURT: Are you pleading guilty to  
23 murder in the first degree in this case be-  
24 cause you killed Dr. Martin Luther King under

1 such circumstances that would make you  
2 legally guilty of murder in the first de-  
3 gree under the law as explained to you by  
4 your lawyers?

5 MR. RAY: Yes, legally guilty, uh-huh.

6 THE COURT: Is this plea of guilty to  
7 murder in the first degree with agreed  
8 punishment of 99 years in the State peni-  
9 tentiary freely, voluntarily and understand-  
10 ingly made and entered by you?

11 MR. RAY: Yes, sir.

12 THE COURT: Is this plea of guilty on  
13 your part the free act of your free will,  
14 made with your full knowledge and understand-  
15 ing of its meaning and consequences?

16 MR. RAY: Yes, sir.

17 THE COURT: You may be seated.

18 (Thereupon, the Defendant complied  
19 with the request of the Court.)

20 THE COURT: All right, sir, are you  
21 ready for a jury?

22 MR. FOREMAN: Yes, Your Honor.

23 THE COURT: All right, sir, call 12  
24 names, take them one at a time out of the

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box and call the name.

DEPUTY: James W. Ballard; Gus Cariota;  
Johnny Shaw; James N. Abram; John W. Blackwell;  
Amos G. Black, Jr; J. Paul Howard; Miller  
Williamson; Robert S. St. Pierre, S-t.  
P-i-e-r-r-e.

MR. ST. PIERRE: Here.

DEPUTY: James R. Pate; Joe Stovall, Jr;  
Richard Lee Counsellor.

Amos G. Black?

MR. BLACK: Yes.

DEPUTY: Have a seat in the box.

John W. Blackwell; James N. Abram;  
Robert S. St. Pierre; Miller Williamson;  
J. Paul Howard; Robert Lee Counsellor.  
Last seat.

Joe Stovall, Jr.; James R. Pate;  
Johnny Shaw; Gus Cariota; James W. Ballard.

(Thereupon, the jurors were seated  
in the jury box.)

GEN. CANALE: May it please the Court,  
Gentlemen of the Jury, I will introduce  
myself. My name is Phil M. Canale, Jr. I  
am the District Attorney here in Shelby



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MR. SHAW: Yes, sir.

MR. FOREMAN: You would write the same  
verdict also? Your answer is the same?

MR. SHAW: Yes, sir.

MR. FOREMAN: Mr. Cariota, is that  
your answer, sir?

MR. CARIOTA: Yes, sir.

MR. FOREMAN: And you, Mr. Ballard?

MR. BALLARD: Yes, sir.

MR. FOREMAN: You would? Thank you.  
Thank you very much.

Thank you, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Do both sides accept the  
jury?

MR. FOREMAN: We do, Your Honor.

GEN. CANALE: The State does, Your  
Honor.

MR. RAY: Your Honor, I would like to  
say something too, if I may.

THE COURT: All right.

MR. RAY: I don't want to change any-  
thing that I have said. I don't want to  
add anything onto it either. The only thing  
I have to say is, I don't exactly accept

1 the theories of Mr. Clark.

2 In other words, I am not bound to  
3 accept these theories of Mr. Clark.

4 MR. FOREMAN: Who is Mr. Clark?

5 MR. RAY: Ramsey Clark.

6 MR. FOREMAN: Oh.

7 MR. RAY: And Mr. Hoover.

8 MR. FOREMAN: Mr. who?

9 MR. RAY: Mr. J. Edgar Hoover. The  
10 only thing, I say I am not -- I agree to  
11 all these stipulations. I am not trying to  
12 change anything. I just want to add some-  
13 thing onto it.

14 THE COURT: You don't agree with  
15 whose theories?

16 MR. RAY: I meant Mr. Canale, Mr.  
17 Foreman, Mr. Ramsey Clark. I mean on the  
18 conspiracy thing. I don't want to add  
19 something onto it which I haven't agreed  
20 to in the past.

21 MR. FOREMAN: I think that what he is  
22 saying is that he doesn't think that Ramsey  
23 Clark's right or J. Edgar Hoover is right.

24 I didn't argue them as evidence in

1 this case. I simply stated that under-  
2 writing and backing up the opinions of  
3 General Canale, that they had made the  
4 same statement.

5 You are not required to agree or  
6 withdraw or anything else.

7 THE COURT: You still -- your answers  
8 to these questions that I asked you would  
9 still be the same?

10 MR. RAY: Yes, sir.

11 The only thing is I just didn't want  
12 to add anything onto them. That was all.

13 THE COURT: There is nothing in these  
14 answers to these questions I asked you,  
15 in other words, you change none of those?

16 MR. RAY: No, sir. No, sir.

17 THE COURT: In other words, you are  
18 pleading guilty and taking 99 years, and  
19 I think the main question here that I want  
20 to ask you is this:

21 Are you pleading guilty to murder in  
22 the first degree in this case because you  
23 killed Dr. Martin Luther King under such  
24 circumstances that would make you legally



1 THE COURT: Are you gentlemen ready  
2 for the jury, or do you want to do some  
3 more scene-shifting around?

4 MR. BEASLEY: No, sir. I think we  
5 are ready, yes, sir.

6 THE COURT: Bring them in.

7 (Thereupon, the following proceed-  
8 ings were had in the presence  
9 and hearing of the jury:)

10 MR. BEASLEY: May it please the  
11 Court, Gentlemen of the Jury, I propose  
12 at this time to narrate to you gentlemen  
13 a stipulation of the facts and evidence  
14 that the State would prove in addition  
15 to the testimony that you heretofore heard  
16 in the trial of this cause.

17 Gentlemen, if you look in this di-  
18 rection, this is an enlargement of this  
19 area that is reflected on the overall mock-  
20 up here (indicating).

21 This, specifically, is the rooming  
22 house designated as 422 1/2 South Main,  
23 the upper floor. We have removed the roof  
24 so you can see the various rooms that are

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THE COURT: All right, is there any-  
thing anyone would want to say at this time?



1 MR. FOREMAN: No, Your Honor.

2 THE COURT: All right, gentlemen.

3 All of you who can do as you said you would  
4 do and accept this compromise settlement  
5 on a guilty plea and punishment of 99 years  
6 in the State penitentiary, hold up your  
7 right hand.

8 (Thereupon, the jury complied  
9 with the request of the Court.)

10 THE COURT: I believe that is every-  
11 one. All right, you can have someone  
12 sign the verdict, Mr. Blackwell.

13 (Thereupon, the verdict was signed.)

14 THE COURT: James Earl Ray, stand.

15 (Thereupon, the Defendant complied  
16 with the request of the Court.)

17 THE COURT: On your plea of guilty to  
18 murder in the first degree, as charged in  
19 the indictment, it is the judgment of the  
20 Court that you be confined for 99 years in  
21 the State penitentiary.

22 You may be seated.

23 (Thereupon, the Defendant complied  
24 with the request of the Court.)

1 THE COURT: Now, we have been here  
2 for some time and I don't propose to keep  
3 us here much longer, but I think that the  
4 Court should make a few remarks at this  
5 place in the proceedings.

6 The fact was recognized soon after  
7 this tragic murder took place that there  
8 was no possible conclusion to the case  
9 which would satisfy everybody. And it  
10 was decided at that time that the only  
11 thing that the Judge who drew the unlucky  
12 number, which was me, could do was to try  
13 this case as nearly as possible like all  
14 other cases and to scrupulously follow  
15 the law and the dictates of his own con-  
16 science. I feel that I have done this.

17 Memphis has been blamed for the death  
18 of Dr. King, to me, wrongfully and ir-  
19 rationally. Neither the decedent nor his  
20 killer lived here and their orbits merely  
21 intersected here.

22 The State has made out a case of first  
23 degree murder by lying in wait. And the  
24 question might arise in many minds, "Why



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accept any plea at all? Why not try him,  
try to give him the electric chair?"

Well, I have been a Judge since 1959,  
and I myself have sentenced at least  
seven men to the electric chair, maybe a  
few more. My fellow Judges in this County  
have sentenced several others to execution.

There has been no execution of any  
prisoners from Shelby County in this State  
since I took the Bench in 1959.

All the trends in this country are  
in the direction of doing away with capital  
punishment altogether.

Then how about the conspiracy angle  
of this case and the punishment of any co-  
conspirator?

It has been established by the prose-  
cution that at this time they are not in  
possession of any evidence to indict any-  
one as a co-conspirator in this case. Of  
course, this is not conclusive evidence  
that there was no conspiracy. It merely  
means as of this time there is not suf-  
ficient evidence available to make out a



1 case of probable cause against anybody.

2 However, if this Defendant was a  
3 member of a conspiracy to kill the de-  
4 cedent, no member of such conspiracy can  
5 ever live in peace or security or lie  
6 down to pleasant dreams, because in this  
7 State there is no statute of limitations  
8 in capital cases such as this. And while  
9 it is not always the case, my 35 years in  
10 these criminal courts have convinced me  
11 that in the great majority of cases, Hamlet  
12 was right when he said, "Murder, though it  
13 hath no tongue, will speak with most mi-  
14 raculous organ."

15 I believe the settlement of this  
16 case is a just one to both the Defendant  
17 and the State. I have accepted and ap-  
18 proved the settlement. The Defendant is  
19 represented by able and eminent counsel.  
20 All his rights and all the safeguards sur-  
21 rounding him have been zealously and con-  
22 scientiously observed and adhered to.

23 I cannot let this occasion pass with-  
24 out paying tribute to Tennessee, Southern,

1 American and Western free world justice  
2 and security which was truly a team ef-  
3 fort involving scores and even hundreds  
4 of persons.

5 You have heard from stipulation here  
6 the police departments of Canada, of  
7 Mexico, of Portugal, of England, of the  
8 F.B.I., the local police, the State of  
9 Tennessee, the Sheriff's office here has  
10 had the onus of this prisoner's security.  
11 I highly praise them all. I think that  
12 it took the team effort to bring this  
13 case to a just conclusion.

14 I must also mention Mr. Charles Holmes,  
15 the Sheriff's liaison with the news media,  
16 and finally, my amici curiae committee,  
17 whose efforts have been of inestimable  
18 value to me.

19 I wish all these people to know  
20 officially and personally that I appreciate  
21 their efforts in bringing this case to a  
22 just conclusion, and if I have overlooked  
23 anyone I want to especially thank them too.

24 Defendant in open court has voluntarily

1 admitted his guilt to first degree murder,  
2 this in the presence of the Court and this  
3 company, and he has pled guilty before  
4 this jury and accepted his punishment.

5 This Court, nor no one else, knows  
6 what the future will bring, but I submit  
7 that up to now we have not done too badly  
8 here for a "decadent river town".

9 If I may be permitted to add a light  
10 touch to a solemn occasion, I would like  
11 to paraphrase the great and eloquent  
12 Winston Churchill, who, in defiant reply  
13 to an Axis threat that they were going to  
14 wring England's neck like a chicken, said,  
15 "Some chicken, some neck."

16 I would like to reply to our Memphis  
17 critic, "Some river, some town."

18 Is there anything else?

19 GEN. CANALE: Yes, sir. Your Honor,  
20 we have this dangerous weapons indictment,  
21 and I would like for the Court to -- I  
22 recommend a nol pros on that without cause.

23 As Your Honor knows, he was indicted  
24 for this before he was apprehended in



1 London. Carrying a dangerous weapon is  
2 not an extraditable offense under our  
3 treaty with England, and the treaty also  
4 says that whatever he wasn't brought back  
5 on, he cannot be held to try it on, and  
6 as far as carrying a dangerous weapon,  
7 I recommend a nol pros without cause on  
8 it, Your Honor.

9 THE COURT: I have already ruled that  
10 we couldn't travel ---

11 GEN. CANALE: Your Honor has already  
12 said we couldn't travel on that, didn't  
13 you?

14 Just one more thing for the record,  
15 Your Honor.

16 It was stipulated and agreed between  
17 the defense and myself that these mock-ups  
18 we have in the courtroom, the two mock-ups  
19 of the scene, were accurate replicas of  
20 the scene down there. We have referred to  
21 them quite a bit, but I just thought I  
22 better put it in the record, that it was  
23 stipulated and agreed that they were ac-  
24 curate mock-ups to scale.

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THE COURT: All right, sir. Now,  
I believe that I have been told that  
lunch has been prepared for the jury.

DEPUTY: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: All right, gentlemen,  
you have spent a long morning, so you  
will get a lunch out of it anyway.

All right, is there anything else  
before we recess?

All right, you can adjourn the Court.

(ADJOURNMENT)